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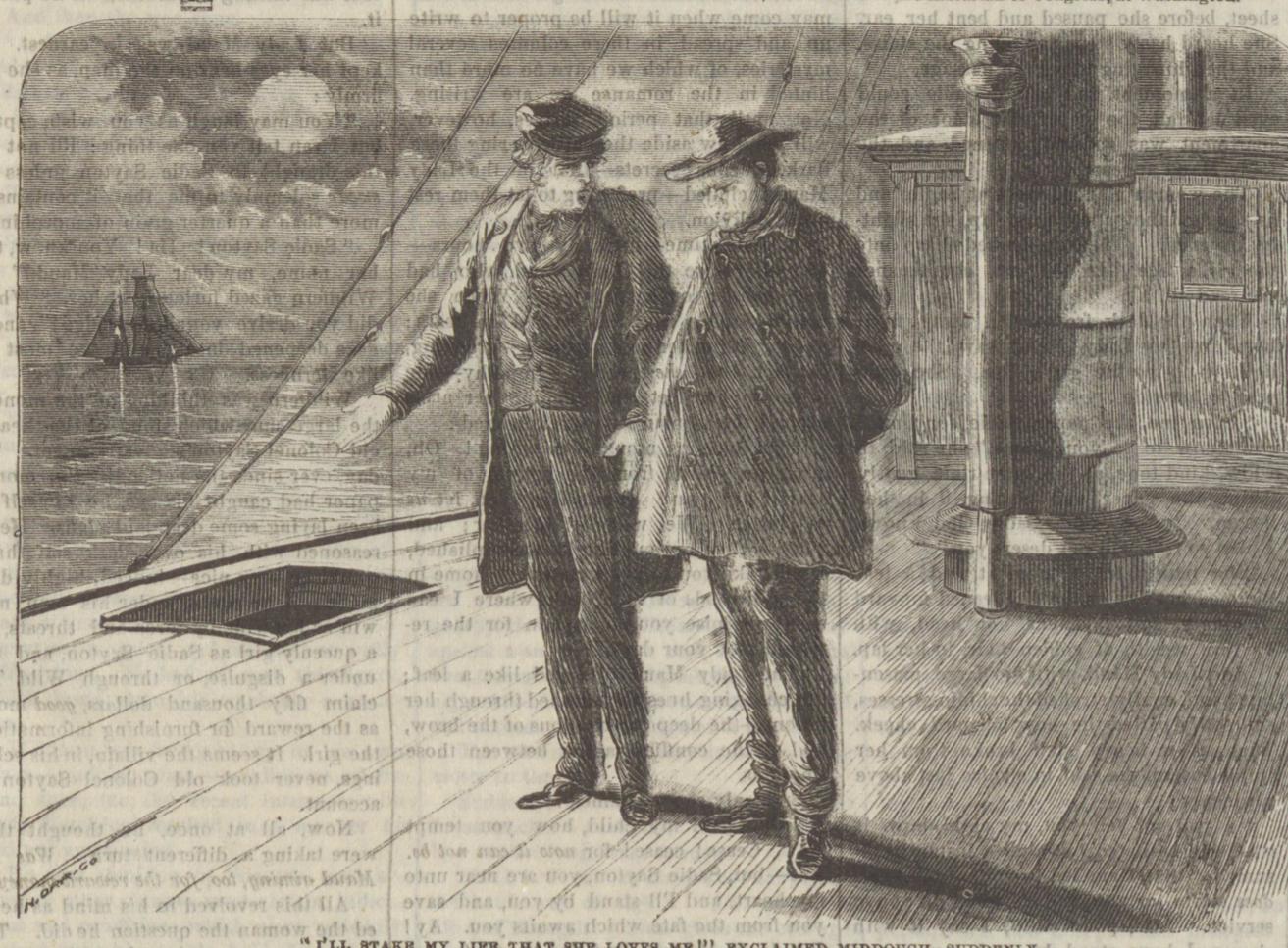
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THE HEART OF FIRE; OR, MOTHER VERSUS DAUGHTER. A REVELATION OF CHICAGO LIFE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

Author of "The Ace of Spades," "The Scarlet Hand," "The Witches of New York," Etc.

CHAPTER XL.

A QUESTION AND AN ANSWER.

THE staunch propeller, "State of Michigan," was plowing her way through the moonlit waters of the lake, her prow headed toward Chicago.

It was a beautiful night, clear and cool. The hands of the clock in the pilot-house had long since passed the figures that denoted eleven, and midnight was near at hand.

Two men were pacing up and down the deck, wherein the moonbeams played in rays of silvery light.

We will describe them.

One was an old man. His hair and beard were white as snow. Keen were the blue eyes that sparkled above his ruddy cheeks.

And though the snows of seventy winters had whitened his locks, yet his step was as light and his form as stalwart as though he were in the bright heyday of manhood.

Another strange fact, too, had been noted by those whose business brought them in contact with Kenwood, and that was, that his neck was encircled by a scarlet ring imprinted on the flesh—a vivid mark, as if a hand of fire had grasped the throat and left its blazon there.

Kenwood generally wore a scarf around his neck as if he wished to conceal the strange blemish on his throat.

This scarlet ring, taken in connection with his silence, and the gloom ever upon his brow, gave all that knew him the idea that in his past life were chapters of fearful meaning.

As the two paced slowly along the deck of the propeller, Middough, every now and then cast his eyes forward, looking eagerly to the right of the vessel.

"No signs of the Chicago light yet, Mr. Kenwood," he said, after an earnest gaze southward.

"No, sir," replied the other; "but we can not be far from it."

"We should see it before midnight."

"Yes, sir."

"I shall be glad to reach Chicago. I have certain reasons for wishing to be in that city as soon as possible." And as the captain spoke, a glad smile came over his bluish features.

Kenwood did not reply, but paced onward by his side in silence.

"Kenwood, were you ever in love?" questioned the captain, suddenly.

The officer started at the question, and a look of pain passed over his features, but Middough, who was watching the surface of the lake beyond, did not notice.

"Yes, sir. I have been in love, in days gone by," replied Kenwood, in a voice that trembled slightly as he spoke.

"Kenwood, I'm going to ask your advice on a rather delicate subject," said Middough, after a short pause.

"Very well, sir; I will try and give it to the best of my ability."

"What do you think of an old man marrying a young girl? Of course I don't mean a feeble old man, but one like myself for instance, bluff, hardy and full of life," said the captain, slowly.

"I hardly know how to reply," said the other, after a pause. "If I knew the parties perhaps it would be different."

"Take the general idea of the subject."

"Well, from that standpoint, I must say that I do not think that is a wise proceeding on the part of the husband."

Middough cleared his throat a bit. The answer was very unsatisfactory.

"You do not think, then, that such marriages are advisable?"

"No, I do not," answered Kenwood, honestly.

"Well, why so?"

"Because I can hardly believe it possible that they would be suited to each other; and, of course, unless husband and wife are suited, the marriage can not be a happy one."

"Yes, that's very true," said Middough, slowly; "but if the parties were suited to each other—"

"Why, then, of course they would live happily together; but, as a general thing, I think that such marriages would not be productive of happiness."

"Well, now, take a case like this," and the captain grew earnest in his tone. "Suppose that an old man, or one that the world calls old, although he himself feels that he has twenty years of life in his veins yet—suppose that such a man, wealthy and holding a good position among his fellow-men, should happen to meet with a beautiful girl, who poor and belonging to the poorer class; supposing that, attracted by her beauty and gentleness, he took an interest in her, and that she, despite the difference in their years, returned that interest; suppose the man, finding that he really did like the girl, proposed to her to make her his wife, without thinking of the difference in their social positions, and she gratefully accepted that offer, don't you think that she would make a good wife and that the marriage would be a happy one?" And the captain looked earnestly in the face of his companion when he had finished.

"Are you sure that the girl is not dazzled by the position and wealth of her suitor?"

That she loves the comfort, luxury, that she will receive by the union rather than the man who gives them to her?" said Kenwood, earnestly.

For a moment Middough looked puzzled at the question.

"Well, I don't know, I suppose that it is hard to say," he replied, finally. "But, even in that case," he continued, warming up with the subject—"even allowing that the girl is influenced more by the thoughts of what the union will give her than by her love for the man, then gratitude for the benefit he has conferred upon her should make her love him after marriage, if she did not before." And the captain paused with a look on his face that plainly said that he considered his argument unanswerable.

"Gratitude, captain, is a strange quality," said Kenwood, quietly. "Gratitude sometimes turns into hate apparently without reason, except that the weight of obligation is too heavy to be borne with ease."

Many a man and woman in this world has—like the snake—turned upon and stung the hand that has befriended them. Gratitude is an uncertain ally to count upon in this world's battles. There are some in this life so worthless at heart that, the more you do for them the more they think you ought to do—who really hate you because they are indebted to you."

"That's very true," said Middough, thoughtfully.

By nature, Kenwood was silent and reserved. He spoke but little, and did not invite conversation. Those who came in daily contact with him noticed that a cloud seemed ever on his brow. Naturally they guessed that some heavy sorrow had, at

"I do not say that it is the fact in this case, for I suppose your supposition concerns a living man and woman."

Middough silently nodded assent.

"Still, it is as well to consider all these things. I do not say it is impossible that a young girl should truly love a man much her senior in years, but I do say that it is unlikely."

For a few moments the two paced the deck in silence.

"I'll stake my life that she loves me!" exclaimed Middough, suddenly.

Kenwood was not astonished at the exclamation, for he had guessed that the captain was one of the supposed parties.

"Then you are the man, captain?"

"Yes."

"And the woman?"

"A blue-eyed girl of eighteen that I met just by chance in one of the worst streets in all Chicago."

"And you love her?"

"Yes; she has bewitched me."

"Bewitched you!" Kenwood smiled at the expression.

"Yes, I'll tell you all about it."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MARK ON THE NECK.

For a moment or so the two walked in silence, then the captain spoke:

"I had occasion one day just about a month ago to enter into a little saloon on Wells street, called the Kankakee House, and there I beheld the prettiest woman that I have ever laid eyes on. She was a little sprite of a girl, about eighteen years old, with short, golden curls, bright blue eyes and the face of an angel—a perfect little witch. I confess that I was fascinated at the first glance, long as I have lived in the world. Of course I found an excuse to go to the saloon again and again. I got acquainted with the girl, and I found that her disposition was as angelic as her face. She is the daughter of the man that keeps the saloon. His name is Casper. The girl is called Lurlie."

"A strange name."

"Yes, but it suits her well. Lurlie—tore; that is, using the word in its best sense—to attract."

"Yes, but it is generally used attached to perfumes; to lure, to attract to danger," said Kenwood, dryly.

"Well, there is danger in her—danger to any man's heart that looks upon her," said the captain, gayly. "But, to be brief: I took a strange interest in the girl, and she seemed gratified at my notice. She apparently put herself out to please me. I noticed this, mind you, without letting her see that I was watching her. There was such a charm about her, so much gentleness and innocence, that, even if I had not wished to love her I should have been compelled to do so despite my will. On my last visit there I asked her how she would like to become an old man's darling? If she thought that she could be happy as my wife? Ah, Kenwood, it would have done your heart good to have seen that girl's features when the offer fell upon her ears. For a moment she looked me full in the face with those soft blue eyes of hers opened to their widest extent, as if she was unable to comprehend my meaning. Then, when it was plain to her the moment afterward, the tears strolled into her eyes, and she hid her face on my breast, and said that she did love me. Kenwood, I felt ten years younger that moment. 'Tisn't every man of my age that can win the love of a pure young girl's heart."

"And you are going to marry her?" asked Kenwood, who had a dim suspicion that perhaps the old captain was not quite as sharp-sighted as he imagined himself to be.

"Well, it is not exactly settled yet," replied the captain, with some slight hesitation.

"She confessed freely that she loved me, but asked me to wait until my return from this trip before she gave a decided answer. But, there's no doubt about it whatever. I read in the girl's eyes that she loved me and meant to consent. It was only maiden coyness that impelled her to ask for the delay. I am sure that when I visit her to-morrow, and ask her to name the day for our marriage, she will do so at once. I shall be the happiest old fellow in Chicago."

And the captain rubbed his hands together gleefully, as he spoke.

Kenwood watched him with a peculiar look in his eyes. It was evident that he was no believer in the power of love.

"Well, captain, I wish you joy," he said.

"I'll try and deserve it," replied Middough, cheerfully. "I have opened my heart to you to-night, because I knew you to be a sensible man and that you could give me good counsel."

Kenwood could not forbear smiling at the idea of counseling a man who had so fully made up his mind as to what he should do.

"Of course I haven't said a word about this affair to any of my relations," said Middough. "A precious row they'd kick up if they had any idea that I was going to put my neck into the matrimonial halter at my time of life, as they would say. Just as if a man was ever too old to do a wise thing!"

"You are the best judge, probably," said Kenwood, quietly. He thought that advice would be thrown away upon a man so determined upon his course of action as Middough.

"It is possible that you may meet him."

"Yes; and when that hour comes, either he or I will stand before the Great Judge a few minutes after."

"And that is?"

"That I may one day meet this fiend who committed the horrible outrage, and have a chance to put my mark on him as he has on me."

"Intense with feeling was the tone that he spoke in."

"It is possible that you may meet him."

"Yes; and when that hour comes, either he or I will stand before the Great Judge a few minutes after."

"Hullo! there's the Chicago light!"

And so the conversation ended.

sensible young dog, for such a devil-may-care fellow as he is. I sounded Wirt carefully upon the subject before I went away on this trip, and he fully agreed with me, that it was possible for a young girl to love an old man, and that I had a perfect right to do as I pleased in all things regarding myself. Of course I didn't let the young rascal see what I was driving at."

"Then you intend to be married soon?"

"Yes; just as soon as I get Lurlie to consent. I haven't got so much time in the world that I can afford to waste any of it," replied the captain.

"That is true."

"By the way, Kenwood," said Middough, suddenly. "There is something about you that puzzles me."

"Indeed! what is it?"

"The abstraction that you seem to be perpetually in—the cloud on your face. It doesn't suit with you at all. You must have suffered terribly at some time in your past life to have the effects still so visible upon you."

"You are right; I have suffered terribly," replied Kenwood, in a tone that told plainly that even the thought of that suffering was bittersweet.

"I hope I am not intruding upon your confidence," said Middough, kindly.

"Oh, no; not at all. It is but natural that you should wonder at my gloomy abstraction. I'll tell you the cause of it. You have made me your confidant; I'll return the compliment; perhaps it will make me feel better to speak of the past."

"Has that peculiar scarlet mark around your neck any thing to do with your story?"

"Yes; that is a symbol to keep alive the memory of the wrong that has been done me, and keep me from forgetting that, some day, I may have bloody vengeance for that wrong," replied Kenwood, in a voice that showed how the memory of the past rankled in his breast.

"To begin at the beginning: I am a native of an Eastern State, by profession a sailor, and have followed the sea from early boyhood. At the commencement of our late war I enlisted on the Northern side. My regiment was ordered to the West. I served my term out, then re-enlisted. I rose gradually, so that, when my regiment was ordered to join Steele in his Arkansas expedition, which resulted in the capture of Little Rock, I held a commission as first lieutenant."

"After the capture of the Rock, my regiment was sent to Pine Bluff. We were in garrison there for some time. Then we went on the Camden expedition, and then, when we returned, went again to the Bluff."

"One day, on a scouting expedition, I halted for water at a little house, some twenty miles from the Bluff, on the river road. There I became acquainted with a young and pretty girl. I took quite a fancy to her, and she to me. With the exception of an aged father, she was alone in the house. Her two brothers were in the ranks of the First Arkansas Regiment, fighting for the Union. Like her brothers, the girl was loyal to the old flag."

"Of course, I managed in my scouting expeditions to pay quite a number of visits to this young lady."

"One day, on dismounting at the house, I found her in tears. After much solicitation, she told me what the matter was. A noted guerrilla leader, fighting on the Confederate side, had, like me, stopped at the house, and, like me again, had fallen in love with the girl. She, however, had repulsed his suit. This man had heard of my visits to the lady, and had openly threatened to her that he would lay in wait for me some fine day and provide me with a hempen collar. I laughed at the threat, of course. I had little fear, but the girl was terrified at the thought of my being exposed to danger, and implored me to be careful, which I promised, readily. I had counted without my host, though; for, one day, when at the farm-house with my men, the guerrillas came down upon us like an avalanche. Half my squad were killed outright; the rest fled, and I was taken prisoner. As the guerrilla promised, I was provided with a hempen collar, and swinging up to a tall cottonwood tree, right before the eyes of the girl. She fainted with fright, and was carried off by this demon. She was never heard of after. The rest of my regiment arrived just in time to cut me down and save my life, but I lay on my back for many an hour, just between life and death. The mark of the rope is still on my neck, you see. I shall wear it to my dying day."

"A terrible story."

"Yes; do you wonder that I am abstracted and silent when I have this horrible memory ever with me? Sleeping or waking, I pray but for one thing."

"And that is?"

"Yes, ma'am," he replied.
"Did he say that he was going to bed at once?"

"He didn't say nothing at all 'bout it," Rick answered. "He only wanted to know if I could get him some beer, that's all."

"Very well, get it, then," and Lurlie, reaching the landing, went into her room and closed the door.

"I wonder what she is so mighty curious 'bout this feller for?" and Rick ran his hands through his shock of red hair reflectively. "I never see'd her so before. 'Pears to me that something's up. I must find out what it is." And with this reflection, Rick descended to the bar, got his pitcher of ale, and again ascended to the room of the stranger.

Lurlie, after entering her room, paced the floor for a few moments, evidently in great agitation.

"Now let me think!" she cried, sinking with an air of weariness into a chair. "That he has recognized me, I am sure. I detected it in the glitter of those cruel black eyes. How I loved those eyes once, and that man! How I hate him now! I am sure that he will try to harm me. I know that he hates me fully as much as I hate him. He is poor, too; that is evident by his shabby dress. His old ill luck still clings to him, then. What evil genius sent him here just at this moment? Just as I had fancied that, hereafter, this world's life would be easy for me, and that, though the past was all gloom and shame, the future might be bright with peace and happiness?"

Then she rose from her seat, and for a few moments paced the floor with the stealthy and nervous tread of the caged tiger.

"Heaven knows I do not want to kill him but I *must*; it is forced upon me! I have but one choice—one road to follow, and that leads to death. If he learns that I have fascinated this old captain, he will denounce me to him. Then my vision of happiness, of wealth, will be destroyed, and by his hand, too. Has he not wronged me enough already? Why should he live to make my life one of torture?" He is in my power. Fate has given him into my hands. Besides I will not shed his blood, although I take his life. A single twist of the fingers and the deed is done. No tell-tale blood; no marks of violence will betray the manner of his death. All will think that it is the result of accident. Oh! I do not want to do it!" and for a moment she wrung her hands in agony.

"But, it must be. His hateful presence shall not keep me from treading the path to wealth that a kind fortune has placed before my feet. I *will* be this man's wife if I had to destroy not one Bertrand Tasnor, but ten! Oh! how well I remember his name, and how I used to watch for his step, and count the hours that intervened between our stolen meetings! But now, in the place of love, is hate—bitter, unrelenting hate! Oh! let me rest awhile. My brain seems to be on fire." With a convulsive sob Lurlie, the strange compound of a woman and a tiger, threw herself upon the bed, and buried her face in the pillow.

For half an hour or so she remained there, sobbing convulsively but lowly.

Strange words came in between the convulsive sobs. She murmured of a babe, and blamed herself for that babe's death.

Many a dark secret was in that little head that the bright, crispy curls crowned with rays of glittering gold!

After a time the sobs grew fainter and less frequent.

She rose from the bed and bathed her temples.

"He must have gone to bed by this time," she murmured. Then she went to the door and listened. All was still in the house.

"I can easily find the little door," she said, "and then, that once opened, death will come to him, not suddenly but surely, a death that he can not fight against, for it will steal upon his senses and numb them to forgetfulness."

Then again she opened the door and listened. As before, all was still.

"I am sure that I can find the door, even in the dark," she said. "If I take a light when I open the door the rays may penetrate into the room and might alarm him should he chance to awake; but, that is unlikely. Why should he lay awake? He can not expect danger. I did not let him see that I recognized him."

Then to her ears came the sound of foot-steps descending the stairs, and in a few moments Rick appeared bearing in his hand the light that he had taken from the room occupied by the stranger.

"What have you got there, Rick?" said Lurlie, appearing at her door suddenly, as the boy passed. Rick started as if he had been shot, and the lamp almost dropped from his hand.

"Why, Miss Lurlie," he said, after drawing a long breath, "how you frightened me."

"Where did you get that lamp from?" she demanded.

"From the room where the gentleman is," replied the hunchback.

"Ah! he has gone to bed, then?" exclaimed Lurlie, hoping that it was so.

"Yes, miss," said Rick, who did not dare tell her that he had told the stranger about the gas. He saw that she was anxious about the unknown, and had taken his appearance with the lamp as a sign that the stranger had retired to rest.

"You need not sit up any longer, Rick; you can go to bed."

"Yes, miss," said the boy, slowly proceeding down-stairs to his bed, which was only a heap of rags in a little dark recess formed by the stairway. "Wouldn't she cut up rough, if she knew that I'd told that feller up-stairs all 'bout the room I'm up to something, to-night; I kin tell that by her eyes. They look just like the eyes of a cat. I reckon she won't make much out of that gent up-stairs, though. He's just as cool as an iceberg. Why, a parlor wind in winter's a fool to him!"

If I go with him it will be jist high times for me!" And, with this pleasant reflection, Rick crawled into his little den, put out the light, gathered the rags around him and was soon in that paradise—which is free alike to all in this world, be they prince or peasant—the land of dreams.

Lurlie watched Rick until the glimmer of his light was lost in the turn of the stairway.

"Shall I go now or wait for a few minutes?" she asked herself. For a moment she pondered. "I had better wait," she said, at length. "He must be asleep, or my plan will fail; yet, even if it does, he will not be apt to suspect that it is a blow aimed at his life."

Lurlie returned to her room, and for a quarter of an hour or more remained quietly seated, buried in gloomy thoughts. Suddenly she rose to her feet.

"It is time," she murmured; "he must be asleep by this."

Quietly and carefully she stole up-stairs. Hardly a board creaked under her light tread.

She reached the landing whereon was situated the room that had been assigned to the stranger.

Cautiously she opened the door of the room next to that one, and entered.

To return to Bertrand: After the departure of the hunchback, he turned the gas-light down so that it burned with a faint blue flame and threw no light whatever out into the room. Then, with the revolver by his side, he extended himself upon the bed, ready for the approach of the foe that he felt sure would attack him at some time during the night.

The gas was within easy reach. In a second he could turn it up to its full height.

Bertrand waited patiently.

Time passed, and yet no sign of the anticipated foe.

Then, suddenly, a slight noise fell upon the listener's ear.

With every sense aroused to acuteness, he waited.

The noise came from the direction of the little secret door in the wall. It was plain that some one was opening it.

"I wonder if it is he?" he muttered, as he raised the revolver—he had previously cocked it—and trained it in the direction of the little door. "Is it fate that she shall perish by my hand?"

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 30.)

\$50,000 Reward:

THE ROMANCE OF A RUBY RING.

A PHILADELPHIA HISTORY AND MYSTERY.

BY WM. MASON TURNER, M. D.,
AUTHOR OF "MARKED MINER," "UNDER BAT," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A QUESTION OF TRUST AND—MONEY.

SADIE glanced around her, and then suddenly sat up in bed. She had heard the rustle of the paper; she was now looking for it.

She started as her eyes fell upon it.

Leaping lightly to the floor, she stooped, picked up the newspaper, and drew a chair directly under the light. Greedily spreading open the paper she began to read.

It must be remembered that the room opened not at all on the outside world directly, save through the chimney. Of course not much light could come through that medium. The gas which was kept constantly burning, therefore, alone lit the apartment.

Sadie glanced hurriedly over the columns of the paper before her; she longed to learn something of the great, bustling world outside, from which she was so closely, so rigidly excluded. To the poor girl it seemed that instead of a day or two, she had been shut up a whole month. The time had dragged heavily with her, and for the most part she had lain in a sort of half-stupor, perhaps *torpor*, were a better word.

No wonder, then, that she clutched the paper so tight, and devoured its contents with ravenous eyes.

Up and down the closely-printed columns she glanced. Every thing was read with avidity.

Suddenly, as she accidentally gazed over one of the advertising pages, she paused. Her eye burned down into the sheet before her—her bosom heaved, and she gasped for breath.

She had found and read her father's advertisement concerning herself!

From the room where the gentleman is," replied the hunchback.

"Ah! he has gone to bed, then?" exclaimed Lurlie, hoping that it was so.

"Yes, miss," said Rick, who did not dare tell her that he had told the stranger about the gas. He saw that she was anxious about the unknown, and had taken his appearance with the lamp as a sign that the stranger had retired to rest.

At length she looked up. Her face was calm, and there was quiet in her bosom.

She reached down and again picked up the paper. Once more she glanced over the advertisements.

Suddenly she started again as she saw the name "Frank Hayworth" signed to a notice.

Frank Hayworth was the *Hawkshaw* of that fatal night to her at the theater, and he was one very dear to her.

And then Sadie glanced sadly, musing, at the finger on which she had worn Allan Hill's last gift—the ruby ring, which she thought now forever lost. Tears came to her eyes, and falling over her pallid cheeks, dropped upon the rich carpet of the floor.

But again Sadie conquered her emotions, and turned to the paper to read Frank Hayworth's advertisement. Scarcely, however, had she spread out the crumpled sheet, before she paused and bent her ear. She heard hasty steps ascending the stairs, and then hurrying along the passage.

In a moment, and before Sadie could even let fall the paper, the door of the apartment was suddenly opened and the Lady Maud appeared.

The woman glanced once at Sadie, and as she saw the paper in her lap, she slightly frowned. Then she looked sharp into the girl's face. In that sad countenance she read all.

Then the dark frown fled away from her brow as Lady Maud saw the glad lighting-up of the girl's face. She drew near to her side.

"Give me the paper, Sadie, for that I now know to be your name," she said, in a low, kind tone, at the same time gently taking the paper and placing it in her bosom. "And—and—Sadie, God knows, I pity you; I will not desert you."

She paused for a moment, and a tear dimmed her eye as the girl leaned forward trustingly, and laid her hot head, with its rare wealth of golden hair, in her lap.

And Lady Maud, with her large, masculine hand, gently stroked the shining tresses, and softly patted the now haggard cheek. Then, as a heavy sigh broke from her ample bosom, she said, in a voice just above a whisper:

"I can not tell you, my child, how it is—" she hesitated, but almost instantly resumed, "that I am led to you. My heart does warm for you, and I would do you a service. Alas, poor child, I say it with shame, I have stood by and seen many dark crimes committed. And I have heard pitiable, gurgling death-means! And cries for help as knives were clashing! And then, with a callous heart and an undimmed eye, I have seen struggling limbs straightened out in death! Oh, God! And, Sadie, a dark fate is in store for you! Do not interrupt me. This man would force you into a horrible, loveless marriage for money! But in me you have a warm, yearning friend—one who now knows your story well—one who pities your youth, and who would see you go forth from this house unspotted and untrammeled; one who would allay the anguish of your poor father's bosom—one who would assist you to find him whom you love! You see, my child, I know all."

Again she paused—again she stroked the golden hair of the sorrowing girl.

Then Sadie raised her head and took Lady Maud's hands gently within hers; and the woman did not withdraw them. She seemed like a different person.

"Again I say, my dear madam, may God bless you. Oh! can you not help me? And can you not go with me?" and she laid her cheek close to that of the Lady Maud, and gazed appealingly in her face.

The woman started violently, and then a wild, convulsive shudder swept over her frame. Then, as she rallied, she suddenly drew the girl tenderly to her, and in her own strong grasp pressed her to her bosom.

And now tears were falling fast from the eyes of Lady Maud; and that broad bosom on which she had pillow'd the fair head of Sadie Sayton was rising and falling tumultuously—like unto the sea, shaken by rude winds.

Then, in a low, agonized voice, she spoke:

"No! no! my child!" she exclaimed. "I can not take you hence; nor, alas! can I go with you. My hands are tied, Sadie. I am bound by a fearful power—one which now I can not openly break. Oh, God! my child, how your words sink into my soul! How I would long to fling behind me past regrets—to bury my remorse and my repentance deep down in bottomless grave and flee with you! But—but—not yet! not yet! . . . Hark you, my child!" and she suddenly sunk her voice, which had gradually risen to a swelling pitch down to a low underbreath; "as I have said, you have awakened singular emotions in my bosom—emotions which for years have lain dormant—dead—as I supposed. I am drawn toward you as by some magnetic influence. . . . If you will listen to me, my child, I will tell you a sad tale, one which perhaps will prove to you that I am not altogether as bad as I seem, nor am I to blame wholly for the part I now play. . . . I will tell you of certain dark secrets of the dead years, which first crushed my heart, and then made it callous to all cries for help and mercy. Will you listen, Sadie?" and she again patted softly the cheek laid against her bosom.

The girl nodded, and straightening up seated herself in a chair near Lady Maud,

still retaining one of the woman's large hands. And then her soft blue eyes dwelt inquiringly, trustingly, on the woman's face.

Before speaking, however, Lady Maud arose to her feet, entered the passage-way without, and listened intently for a moment. Then she returned and closed the door behind her. She seated herself by Sadie's side, and placing her arm around the maiden's waist, she began a strange and fearfully thrilling tale.

This weird recital told by the Lady Maud to Sadie, that cold winter morning, in the strange room of the mysterious Locust street mansion, can not now, nor in this story, be laid before the reader; for, though intensely thrilling—even fearful in its details, we must confess that it has no practical bearing in the story we are weaving.

We therefore forbear to give it. A time may come when it will be proper to write up and spread in these columns several mysteries, of which we have no more than hinted in the romance we are writing. Not until that period arrives, however, will we draw aside the veil covering these dark, hideous secrets—that of the Lady Maud included—preferring to let them rest on oblivion.

A long time—certainly two hours—elapsed before the Lady Maud, who had not paused once, finished. When she ceased, Sadie's face was bathed in tears; and forgetting her own position—forgetting, in fact, that she needed sympathy—she arose to her feet, and flinging her arms around the woman's neck, exclaimed:

"Oh, hideous, monstrous wrong!"

"But, my dear friend, from the bottom of my heart I pity you! Again I beg you, let us go hence. We will fly together; and when—when my mission is accomplished,

I will take you to my own sweet home in the wildwoods of the South, where I can safely promise you an asylum for the remainder of your days!"

The Lady Maud trembled like a leaf;

the changing hues that flashed through her bosom—the deep corrugations of the brow, told of the conflict raging between those emotions.

Suddenly she exclaimed:

"Oh, God! my child, how you tempt me! Cease! cease! for now it can not be. But—but, Sadie Sayton, you are near unto my heart, and I'll stand by you and save you from the fate which awaits you. Ay! I'll do it, though perdition stood in my way!"

And now good-by, Sadie. Be brave, be hopeful, and, above all things, guard well the dagger you possess. It may be the means, at last, of your safety. Trust me. "Tis all I ask."

With that, the Lady Maud, after imprinting a warm, earnest kiss upon Sadie's brow, arose to her feet, and left the room. And, as she had always done, she closed the door, and locking it from the outside, held Sadie a prisoner, as ever.

Lady Maud paused as she entered the hallway.

The light from the gas in the entry below flashed faintly upward, and striking the well-burnished glass of a window on the opposite side, fell directly on the woman's face.

Strange to say, a smile, sardonic, fiendish and mocking, was curling the lip of the Lady Maud.

Had the woman been toying with Sadie Sayton? Had she been simply playing a well-acted, off-acted role?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A QUARTER GRAIN OF MORPHINE.

IN GREENBACKS. But now I must go. Expect me late to-night, and be surprised at nothing."

Then he left the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON THE SCENE.

As soon as Willis Wildfern was gone—and the night had then fallen—Lady Maud hurried up-stairs with the goblet in hand. Only a moment or so elapsed before she stood in Sadie's room.

She waited not to answer the girl's curiosity, but leaning down, whispered some words in her ear. And then she placed the goblet of water by her side.

Rising to her full height she turned to go, but as she neared the door, she paused and said:

"Be brave, Sadie; be true to yourself, and—do not forget your dagger!"

And then she was gone.

* * * It must have been near twelve o'clock that same night, when Willis Wildfern, disguised as we have seen him on former occasions, stood at the door of Sadie Sayton's room. He hesitated but a moment.

Turning the bolt he entered. He glanced like lightning around him.

Sadie was seated quietly in a chair by the bed.

The goblet was empty.

* * * We must go back a little way in our story, for the sake of having an even and unbroken thread—our aim thus far.

When Wildfern left the mansion of Lady Maud, early that evening, he hurried into Walnut street. There he paused and glanced around him. A car was in sight coming along slowly. The man walked down to meet it, and then sprang aboard.

He had not observed a tall, brawny man, who had emerged from the gloom on the shady side of the street opposite the Locust street mansion, and followed on softly behind him. He had not seen this figure, which hung upon his track like a phantom.

Wildfern was wrapped up in his own plans—undoing some—building up others. And then, too, the recent interview with Lady Maud had resulted in a manner he had not anticipated.

He was thinking of this, too, and arranging other plans to meet certain indications and conditions which were suddenly sprung upon him by the bold, decided *mutiny*, as he termed it, of the woman who had worked with him, and whom he had befriended for years.

Willis Wildfern was cogitating about the separation to take place between him and Lady Maud; and he instinctively fondled the handle of a knife in the breast-pocket of his inside coat.

That the man was satisfied with his plans was very certain; for when he reached Walnut street—and the distance was not great—he smiled grimly to himself.

He had not seen the tall man who had dogged him. But that man had seen him.

As soon as Wildfern was in the ears the person, who had stepped into the shade of a house at the corner, shrugged his shoulders, and turning at once retraced his steps toward the Locust street mansion. This man seemed to court obscurity—walking on the thin, unlit side of the street; but as he passed near a lamp, the reflection of the light struck, for an instant, full upon his person.

As quick and fleeting as was the flash from the lamp, it revealed a bright row of brass buttons, and a star glittering on the breast of the man's coat; also a heavy baton belted in a sling around the waist.

Then the person was in the shade again, and he was still hurrying on toward Locust street.

In a few moments he turned into this latter thoroughfare, still keeping the shady side. And then he joined a companion, who stood motionless in the gloom directly opposite the residence of Lady Maud.

The men were policemen.

Perhaps they had been sent by—well, by Frank Hayworth—to watch this mysterious house.

When the actor had called for the ring, he was not particularly pleased with the appearance of the woman who had held the door half open to answer his summons.

As he had walked away he linked together, in his mind, the advertised ring and Sadie Sayton; then the latter, by some strange concatenation of thought, with the suspicious house, so closely locked and shut in to itself.

Besides that, since his short sojourn in the city, Frank Hayworth had heard some very singular, very startling reports of this house.

So perhaps these belted guardians of the night had been dispatched thither on a term of duty, at the instance of the actor.

And there they stood, silent and almost motionless—their forms mingling with the surrounding gloom. But they were not drowsy nor inattentive. Their eyes kept vigilant watch over the house, and its adjacent surroundings.

As for the mansion it was wrapped in absolute quiet, and not a light from the black, somber pile gleamed forth on the night.

* * * Willis Wildfern did not get out of the car until it had reached the Schuylerkill. Here he sprang out, and hurrying along Twenty-third street, at last reached Market. Here he paused for a moment, and, for the time, seemed lost in reflection.

He did not consume many moments thus; for suddenly he turned abruptly to the left, and strode away toward the Market street bridge. Some moments elapsed before he stood on the opposite side.

Skirting along the river-bank, he was speedily swallowed up in the gloom.

When we saw the man next, he was crossing Columbia bridge. This did not take any length of time. Then diving down by the bank of the river, he pushed his way along as fast as he could, and as circumstances would allow.

Willis Wildfern was in earnest. That his business was serious, or urgent, was likewise apparent. The man would not have taken such a long walk, and so incommoded himself, on this, one of the coldest nights of the winter, for a trifling stake.

On he strode, never pausing once. He seemed gifted with wonderful power of endurance for one as luxurious as he. All this energy may have been developed by the stimulus of the object in view. That he had an object in view there can be no doubt.

On he went, winding around the tall, frowning bluffs which bordered the banks of the river. At one time his figure could be seen by the faint starlight of the night; at another it would be wholly obscured in the deep gloom of the lovely road or—more properly speaking—path.

At length he reached the rear of Laurel Hill cemetery. Above him, on the heights, slept in almost absolute quiet the lone city of the dead.

The mournful sighing of the night-wind through the leafless branches of the trees, made a sad, melancholy music, which echoed down the bluff, that cold night, and on Wildfern's ear.

The man paused, and an involuntary shudder crept over his frame. He glanced quickly around him, as if he expected to see arise at his elbow some grim and ghastly phantom. Wildfern cowered away against a snow-covered rock as these fears swept over him; and in the sighing of the night-wind, he fancied he heard with awful distinctness the gibberings of a lost spirit.

The man shook in every limb, and clung to the rock.

Suddenly, however, he drew from his breast-pocket a flask, and placing it to his lips, took a long, deep draught.

"Ha! ha!" he exclaimed, as he placed the bottle out of sight. "That gives me life and strength!" That gives me courage to face a hundred devils, and to care nothing for—for the pale faces which will rise up around me! And why should I care for them? They are cold—dead! Nay, they have moldered beneath the turf!

"Turf! Are they beneath the turf? Oh! God! no—no! no! But they can not harm me now, for they are dead—dead!

I must go on! I must win the heart, or crush the impious soul of Sadie Sayton!

"Oh! the wild dream of bliss which floats through my brain as I think of her! She shall be mine! Nothing shall thwart me—not, even heaven itself!"

As he spoke he hurried on again along the snow-covered path. He proceeded some minutes without stopping; but, at length he paused, and turning abruptly to the right, commenced to climb the steep incline.

This did not consume many minutes.

When the man stood on the top, he glanced hurriedly around him through the gloom in every direction.

What he feared, or what he was looking for, in this lonely place, it were hard to conjecture. But Willis Wildfern was wary, and with or without reason he now looked around him keenly.

Naught, however, save the pale, dull-white marbles, gleaming with a spectral pallor all around, fell upon his gaze.

Then he plunged on again.

Suddenly he paused and stood as still as a statue; for at his feet, showing distinctly in the gloom, was the impression of footprints in the snow.

A tremor passed over the man's frame, a pallor, though it could not be seen, sprung to his face. He leaned down and examined the tracks closely. They were made by a large boot, and they were deeply indented, as if he who walked was a heavy man, and trod boldly. And they led in the same direction that he was going!

Wildfern slowly arose to an erect posture, and glanced again, cautiously, around him.

Despite the bitter cold, despite the strong draught he had swallowed, he trembled like a leaf, and a sweat broke out profusely on his face.

Once more he drew out the flask, and placing it to his lips, drank deeply, almost draining the contents before he breathed.

"I must begone!" he muttered. "I feel a deep gloom hanging over me! I feel a rope around my neck! But—but—first Sadie shall be mine! Then for a final settlement of old scores with certain parties, and—I'll be off! Philadelphia, nay, the broad land itself, will be too hot for me, and that in a very few days. Once this ravishingly-beautiful girl conquered, then, my Lady Maud, we may measure our hatred and our knives! But I must be gone."

So saying, he turned at right-angles to the direction in which he was first proceeding and strode away quickly.

After walking on for some two hundred yards, he again turned to the left, virtually resuming the old course he had left. He paused not at all, for the night was deep-

ening, and Wildfern had work enough before him ere the coming of the dawn.

All at once, however, he stopped, as a small, bright light flashed out from a gloomy pile before him.

"Ha!" he muttered, in an anxious tone, "Tom is careless! and—and—there are visitors on the hill!"

Speaking, he hurried on, and in a moment had entered the vault and closed the door. In an instant, then, the light ceased to shine.

Scarcely had Wildfern entered the vault, when a noiseless band, consisting of at least twenty men, suddenly emerged from the gloom, and drew silently around the vault.

(To be continued—Continues in No. 25.)

My Sister's Dream.

BY MARY LEE.

AGATHA came down looking pale and listless.

"What is the matter, Agatha? Haven't you slept well?" my mother asked.

"No; I have scarcely slept at all; and when I did, my dreams were so frightful that I dreamed sleeping less they should be repeated."

"The nightmare, Aggy," said I. "I told you last night that a cup of chocolate was the worst thing possible just before going to bed."

"What a wonderfully wise sister I have! Mother, I wonder you ever thought it necessary to send me to school, while Sarah knows so much more than it is needful she should, that she might simply have told me all I want to know, and thus saved me the trouble of acquiring it."

"My dear sister, telling is not sufficient in your case. If it were, you might have enjoyed a good night's rest, and come down in better humor this morning."

"Stop, stop, my children. I am ashamed of you both. Aggy, you are certainly allowing your irritability to grow on you; and you, Sarah, must adopt a different tone in talking to your sister. Without meaning to be unkind, you are, at times, almost offensive."

By this time Agatha was in tears and I was feeling rather guilty.

"Come, tell us your dream, sister, and perhaps we two Josephs can interpret it for you on other than chocolate grounds."

But Aggy was slow to be comforted, and when she finally did wipe her eyes she flatly refused to say one word about her dream, and so the matter rested.

A few days after I was sewing in my room when Agatha came in with, "Where is your ivory miniature, Sarah? Miss Clark is down-stairs and wants to have me painted."

I blushed to the roots of my hair.

Agatha looked at me in amazement.

"Sarah Carlton, you have given that picture away."

"Have I?"

"Yes; I am confident of it. Well, it does not seem possible! How many times have I heard you say that no man should ever have your likeness unless you had promised to be his wife?"

"People change their mind."

"Yes, ordinary people; but you—" Then, as if a new thought had suddenly struck her—"Sarah, are you engaged to Mr. Desau?"

"Yes."

"And mother knows nothing of it?"

"It was not necessary to tell her."

"And mother knows nothing of it?"

"It was not necessary to tell her."

"And mother knows nothing of it?"

"It was not necessary to tell her."

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"It was not necessary to tell her."

"And mother knows nothing of it?"

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I resigned myself to my fate; I might as well be killed by a ghost on my way home after dark, as be "no gentleman" to Delia; and thinking I could *run* across the dark meadow which lay between Mr. Harwell's and home, I stopped, and partook very plentifully of a bountiful supper.

Mom.—I ought not to have done so, for full stomachs are very bad for rapid velocity, when said velocity is to be attained by the use of the heels.

I began to grow dusky while we were at supper, and as soon as we rose from the table, I begged Delia to get my hat and let me go. After a great deal of pleasure and teasing, she brought the article, stipulating, at the same time, that if she gave it to me, I must reward her by carrying a package of cloth over to Mrs. Thompson, the milliner, who lived on my way.

I couldn't refuse Delia—of course I couldn't—so I took my hat and the bundle with it, and bidding the family a hasty good-night, I closed the door and shot out of the front gate like a dart.

Arrived at Mrs. Thompson's, I prepared to leave the parcel at the door, that there might be no delay; but, unfortunately, the good lady was suffering from rheumatism, and could answer my rap only by an emphatic "come in," which I quickly obeyed, and delivered my errand with the door in my hand. But I was not to escape as easily as I imagined; Mrs. Thompson was a volatile woman, and forthwith she proceeded to give me a succinct account of her rheumatism, from its commencement five years before, up to the memorable Sunday night of which I write.

Glancing at the clock, I perceived, to my intense horror, that half an hour had elapsed and I had made no progress toward home. I tore myself away, the last words of the estimable rheumatic following me out into the night.

"Ye see, Zekiel, Dr. Spoonman ordered molasses and hemlock poultice, and I tried for five mortal weeks, and it didn't."

The result of Dr. Spoonman's wonderful prescription will be lost to posterity, all through my terrible fear of ghosts.

I ran on and on, puffing like an asthmatic locomotive, until I reached a gloomy piece of road lying through the dark meadow before mentioned. Half dead with terror, I struck into a trot which would have done no discredit to a professional racer.

All at once a voice—a singularly sepulchral voice—called out in dreadful tones, so hollow they seemed:

"Stop!"

I was transfixed; for directly in my path stood a tall, white-shrouded figure, with its spectral arms raised high in the murky air. Involuntarily I screamed out:

"Oh, Lordy!"

"Silence, mortal! and listen to me!"

"Don't touch me!" cried I, shrinking back; for the apparition had approached so near that I felt its cold breath on my face.

"Silence, again I tell thee, mortal! as thou valuest thy life, move not the hundredth portion of a barleycorn! I have a message to thee from the regions of infinitude! Wilt thou be quiet and listen?"

"Don't kill me! I—"

"Life and death are not in my hands; but I have come to warn thee! With thou promise to perform whatsoever I shall this night require of thee?"

"Yes—yes—any thing, if you won't come near me! Don't—"

"Enough! Now, hearken! Thou hast been to visit a maiden whom thou lovest—a maiden who loveth thee! Why dost thou not marry her?"

"I—I am afraid to—to ask her." I stumbled out, falling in my retreat backward, over a hedge-fence, and performing sundry summersets, for the benefit of the ghost, before I could regain my feet.

"Mortal, thou hast promised to do my bidding. I require of thee that thou shalt go to-morrow, at the hour of sunset, and ask this maiden for thy bride. If thou shouldst disobey, then woe betide thee! I have spoken."

The vision vanished; and, thrilled through and through (green peas and all), I sprung into the path, and took the shortest cut for home, where I arrived in an incredibly short space of time, more dead than alive.

That night's adventure decided me. I believed the ghost was a visitation for my sin of procrastination, and I resolved to do its bidding. So, the next morning, after bringing the water for my mother to wash, I dressed myself in my best, and without saying a word to any one of my intentions, I went directly over to Mr. Harwell's. I dared not defer the visit until sunset, the ghost had commanded me, for fear I might have a second encounter with my phantom friend.

I knocked at Mr. Harwell's front door, and Delia answered the summons. I had never seen her look handsomer. My heart beat like a trip-hammer.

"Ah, good-morning, Zekiel; pleased to see you. Come in."

"Yes, I guess I will for a few moments, if you're alone, Delia!" and I followed her into the pleasant sitting-room. It was a cosy room; and there were roses in a blue pitcher on the mantel, and roses in a tumbler on the table, and roses in a duster on the window, and roses on Delia's cheeks.

"Sit down, Zekiel; take the rocking-chair, it's softer than the lounge."

"No, Delia; I'd rather sit here, on the lounge beside you, if you've no objection; and down I sat, close beside her, in a flutter of fear, hope, anxiety, bliss, and with a queer sensation in my throat. There was a dead silence.

"Delia?"

"What?"

"Want you to marry me!"

"Sir! Delia's blue eyes opened wide with astonishment.

"Yes; I want you to marry me, and that, too, right quick! The good Lord knows I've been long enough about asking you now."

"So you have," Zekiel, murmured Delia, dropping her head upon my shoulder (gracious! how my heart bounded), "and if father and mother are willing, I think just as they do!"

It's nobody's business any thing about the remainder of our conversation; the ice was broken, and before I left Timothy Harwell's one-story yellow house, the wedding-day was fixed—just four weeks from this blessed Monday morning.

Judge of my father's joy, and my mother's astonishment, on learning the state of affairs. Judge of my own happiness when I came to realize that I had really asked Delia to marry me, and that she had consented! Those four weeks were glorious weeks to me, and I kept up a regular mail line between Harwell's and Hamilton's, never thinking of ghosts once, for wasn't I in a few short days to become double? What did I care for ghosts?

The wedding-day arrived. There was a happy time of it; all the aunts, and uncles, and cousins in the universe were there; and all united in praising the appearance of me and my bride, and our coats, and dresses, and supper; until I didn't know whether I was the bride, or Delia was the bride, or the clergyman.

Mom.—Timothy Harwell had provided a good supply of wine for the occasion.

When we were left alone together that evening, I told Delia the whole story of the ghost, not omitting a single particular.

"Zekiel," says she, "if you'll propose to be angry, I'll tell you something."

"Angry? of course not, my dearest."

"Well, Zekiel, I thought you never was coming to the point, and I was tired of waiting, so I fixed up in a sheet, and made believe myself a ghost."

"You the ghost?"

"Yes, I; are you angry?"

"No; but you are the darlings, blessed est ghost I ever saw in all my life!"

The scene which followed would not probably interest the reader, so I will write it.

I have no fear of ghosts now; I am in possession of the best ghost in the world, or out of it—and so I am content.

Uncle Abner's Wisdom.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"THAT'S my candid opinion; I don't like her, and all your arguing won't change my mind."

Uncle Abner Benjamin settled his steel-rimmed glasses over his sunken, yet keen blue eyes as he spoke.

"But you are prejudiced, uncle Abner; and what sort of an opinion could you give but a biased one? I tell you you are mistaken; and Lillie Warren is as noble a girl as ever lived."

He was a good-looking champion of the mentioned fair one, was Ross Linley; tall of form, dark of feature, manly in his bearing, and uncle Abner gave a sort of grunt as he looked at his earnest black eyes, all alight in his defense of the pretty girl who had been stealing his heart.

"A pretty how-d'ye-do is it, that a strange girl's blue eyes must needs set you clean daff, when there's good, honest, faithful

Just then Amy entered, and then Ross withdrew.

The yellow harvest moon was just peeping, with its jolly face, over the ivy-grown peaked roof of the old homestead, and by the dormer window, away off in the eastern wing, sat Amy Evan. Her day's work was done; the sponge set, and the kindlings placed in the capacious-mouthed stove in readiness for the morning.

She was a neat, pretty girl, with bright, honest brown eyes, that were full of fleet light and shadows; hair of soft, silken brown, arranged in a modest approach to the prevailing mode; a pair of cheeks dusky red, where the sun and wind had kissed them warmly, and a mouth too large for a model of beauty, but sweet and womanly, with small, even white teeth.

Amy Evan was an industrious girl, who could not have existed if compelled to remain idle, and since the day, seven years ago, that she had been a resident of her guardian's house, she had "taken hold" of the householding duties, and worked side by side with Grace, the cook.

Any could leave the kitchen completely behind her when she closed; and to see her in her dainty ruffled *suisse* dress, you'd never have dreamed she spent an entire morning ironing and fluting. Or, in her trailing green silk, that she wore like an empress, and her wee hands encased in such roguish number five Alexander's, no one would have believed she was the same young lady who, in neat purple calico wrapper, had that very day made and baked a dozen loaves of bread, and a stone jar of delicious crullers, and then, on hands and knees, flanneled over the immense marble floor of the hall.

Uncle Abner appreciated her; Grace fairly idolized her; everybody loved her, and I do not say I do not deserve Ross Linley, until Lillie Warren came, and then—

Al! it was that thought that was bringing the proud, bitter tears to Amy's eyes, as she sat there watching the golden light that was transmuting all nature by its beautiful process of alchemy.

"He never could have cared for me, or a fairer face would not so soon attract him. But I loved you so, Ross!"

The words came half-sadly from her lips, as she gazed away down the box-bordered path, and saw Ross Linley and uncle Abner coming up to the side-door.

Their voices fell on her ear; she could not avoid hearing.

They snapped her little fingers, and a gleam of half-malicious mischief shone in her

It was an awful blow; this sudden de-throning of his idol, and he was stunned by it.

He drove up to the villa just as Amy dismounted from her horse, after a ride to the town.

She looked very fair and loveable in her black velvet riding suit, with her jaunty little hat, with its floating white plumes, and somehow Ross felt a wild throb at his heart.

"Miss Evan, let me assist you to the house. Your habit is so long."

She turned a moment in mute surprise at his unwonted attention; then she laughed—and Ross thought how stupid he had been, never to notice how melodious her voice was.

"Miss Evan!" Really, Ross, you are de-mented! When had I the honor of parting company from 'Amy'?"

Her eyes were brilliant, but no gleam of coquetry lurked there, not even a ray of friendship lay in their depths.

"Did I say 'miss'? I'm sure I only meant Amy, dear little Amy!"

She snatched her hand angrily from his.

"I am not a sentimental turn."

She walked on, not noting the sad, pained face he wore.

"But, Amy, Amy, do let me speak! I've been so blind, so foolish, so wicked! Oh, Amy, won't you take me back? Please forgive and forget this awful summer, and let me be your lover forever, Amy!"

Coldly, a little surprised, she confronted him as he stood before her flushed, trembling and agitated.

"Why, Ross, what am I to understand from this strange language? Surely Miss Warren can afford you all you desire!"

"Never mention her name to me again, the unprincipled woman, who does not deserve to be spoken of in the same year with you, my noble Amy!"

He was looking at her eagerly, pleadingly, but she did not seem to heed him.

"Ah, then," and her voice was gay and a little tantalizing, "you want me to take the heart Miss Lillie has trifled with? Thanks, no! But I'll tell you one thing, Ross: six weeks ago I would have been the happiest woman living to have known you loved me. To-day, without a pang for the past, or a sigh for the future, I can look you straight in the eye and say I don't care that for you!"

Their voices fell on her ear; she could not avoid hearing.

She snapped her little fingers, and a gleam of half-malicious mischief shone in her

"Because I don't love him."

Her voice was barely audible, and the old gentleman's heart throbbed joyously a moment.

"And why don't you love him? Do you love any one else?"

"Yes, sir."

She buried her face in her hands, all unconscious of the gray agony on the noble face gazing down on her.

"Then take him whom your heart wants, my little Amy. And my benediction and consent go with you."

"Mr. Benjamin, may I not tell you who my lover is?"

"Tell me whatever you will, darling."

But Amy heard the vainly-hidden anguish in his tones.

"And you'll not be a bit angry?"

Her fingers toyed with his luxuriant gray hair.

"Angry with any thing you could say, little Amy?"

"Then, dear Mr. Benjamin, if you'll let me; it is you I love so dearly."

And her proud head went down on the broad breast of uncle Abner.

"Amy, Amy, can it be true? Do you care for me above all others—I, who have worshipped you all these long years? Oh, Amy, my darling, my precious child, I do not deserve this!"

"But I think you do, Mr. Benjamin. At any rate you are the one I love, Ross Linley's attentions notwithstanding."

"And you'll not mind my gray hairs, and my fifty-two years, my bairie?"

"Indeed I shall mind them! I am proud of them and the noble heart you give me than of any thing else in this wide world."

"Then, darling, let me kiss you while I whisper a praise-offering to God for this great blessing."

And Ross Linley, just outside the window, crept away with a cold agony at his heart that would freeze there for many a long day.

The Unwilling Sacrifice.

BY FANNY ELLIOTT.

THIS cool western wind of that sunny-skied October day came strongly in at the window where Mamie West was sitting, lifting the delicate pink lawn skirt from off her slippers and making her bronze-gold hair blow in a gay flutter.

She made a sweet, homelike picture as she sat there making a shirt for uncle Tunis, and the while singing some merry, joyous melody. Honest-hearted aunt Mary evidently appreciated her, for every little while her knitting would fall unheeded to her lap, and she would gaze and gaze at Mamie. Something seemed to be on her mind, too, judging from the yearning tenderness in her eyes, and the half-nervous manner in which she knitted.

Suddenly she laid down her work and spoke, as if something must be said, and the sooner the better:

"Mamie, how old are you exactly?"

The girl started and then laughed.

"Aunt Mary, how you startled me! Why, I'm twenty next Christmas eve, am I not?"

"Yes, just twenty years old—twenty long years; twenty short years, too."

Mrs. Anderson repeated the words slowly over, as she gazed out on the glowing chrysanthemum bushes. Mamie gazed curiously at her, but made no comment on the rather strange remark, and the old lady continued:

"You don't remember that Christmas night twenty years ago; my sister Annie died then, and you, the motherless baby, were left to me; it has been a long, long time to some people, but a sweet score of years to your old uncle Tunis and I, Mamie. You've brightened the hearthstone ever since you came to us, dear."

Mamie smiled lovingly on the old lady.

"Yes; for twenty thousand dollars, to a gentleman from New York, who bought the mortgage of old Squire Craven, who lent your uncle Tunis the money to start the mill. But, every thing went wrong, Mamie, since then, and on Christmas day, when you'll be twenty-one, we'll not have the roof over our heads."

The big tears were dropping from under the spectacles, and Mamie felt an uncomfortable lump rising in her throat.

"Can't anything be done? And, aunt Mary, has this any connection with Mr. Constantine?"

She seemed to think there existed some relation between her lover and the state of affairs.

"That is the point, Mamie. If you will give your lover up and marry this Mr. Fulmore, who holds the mortgage, who has heard of, and seen you, he promises to give it up to us; and I, Mamie, will give you the estate for your sacrifice."

The girl sat staring at the speaker; a white spot gathering on either cheek.

"Give up Adrian!"

"I was afraid you couldn't! There, there, my child, never mind!"

Mamie was sobbing wildly, and Mrs. Anderson was alarmed.

"Aunt Mary," she said, after a moment, "stay here until I return."

Then she went away; in half an hour she came back, calm, pale as a ghost.

"If Mr. Fulmore can prove his honorable character, I will save the home."

And when the old lady kissed her again and again in her thankful joy, Mamie West never smiled or spoke.

"And you will persist in this ridiculous self-sacrifice? Mamie, surely you never could have loved me, or you'd not throw me over so calmly!"

Young Adrian Constantine stood in the shady lane, his arms folded, his handsome face pale with wounded love and pride.

Before him, leaning against the trunk of the apple tree, was Mamie, with no love-light beaming in her eyes, no smile on her lips.

She was wan and pale, and Adrian's heart ached as he gazed on her.

"Adrian," she said, and her lips quivered, "you are doing me a great injustice. You know why I give you up; you know how wholly I had given my love to you; and do you think I do not suffer?"

Her appealing eyes were begging for the confirmation of her words.

"Mamie, do you think it is modest for you to marry a man whom you will not see till the wedding-day?"

He spoke vehemently, and then regretted it when he saw the sudden, painful blush rise to her face, as she turned, half insulted, half sadly, away, without a word.

"Don't go—one more word, then I will leave you. Who is this man you are to marry?"

"Richard Fulmore."

"Heavens!—Mamie—good-by!"

He darted away as if life or death depended on his speed, and then Mamie went back to the old homestead, and sat down and cried.

The days had come and gone, and Christmastide was within a sunsetting. In the old homestead the bridal array was in readiness, and as Mamie passed the room where it lay, she wondered how aunt Mary could sing so merrily when she knew the happiness she had forever destroyed.

Sometimes she saw Adrian, too, who had called at the farm-house a number of times. He seemed to feel quite reconciled to a change in the bridegroom, and Mamie felt grateful that he never referred to the past.

Sometimes she caught herself wondering if it was right, this blind acceptance of a man she never had seen; and then she would read and re-read the letters of commendation uncle Tunis had received. Besides, aunt Mary said it was all right, and she believed, almost religiously, in aunt Mary.

So the wedding-day came, and the minister came, and the lawyer who was to transfer the property to Mamie West's aunt and uncle, just after the ceremony. The old couple, strangely nervous, sat by the window, and Adrian Constantine talked gayly to Mamie, who, unnaturally calm, awaited the carriage that had gone to meet Richard Fulmore.

He was a tall, handsome man, Mamie noted, as, with heart of ice, she watched him spring from the carriage. His hair and eyes were dark, his air stylish, his gait graceful.

They met as strangers meet, and then came a defiant hate in Mamie's heart for this man.

He had been escorted by Adrian to the guest-chamber, to arrange his toilet, and then it was that Mamie, with crimson cheeks and flashing eyes, protested against her marriage.

"Uncle Tunis, aunt Mary, the place must go! I am filled with loathing at the thought of being his wife. A something I never felt before rises up in my soul and smothers the kindness I thought to do you. Uncle, aunt, gentlemen, I will go away and leave you; you can tell that man I despise and scorn him."

She turned away, to meet Adrian and the stranger at the door.

Lawyer Green detained her gently.

"Only a moment, I beg, Miss West."

Then he went up to the expectant bridegroom.

"Mr. Fulmore, you will be so kind as to sign these papers before the ceremony. Miss West prefers it."

The gentleman glanced at Mamie; she turned away, without speaking.

"If the lady prefers, most assuredly."

He took the pen, and signed the document that made "Hillside" Mary West's.

Then old Mr. Anderson stepped forth.

"Sir, you have but given that child her just deserts. By fraud and trickery you wheeled that mortgage from Squire Craven, who was too dull to comprehend your plans; I knew of no way to regain my rights, for I have lost all my money in the mill speculation. Aunt Mary, here, came to the rescue; and, having heard of the many inquiries you made concerning this pretty child, whom you knew as Mamie West, and hearing you declare your admiration for her, we resolved to give you a chance to win her. You know the result of the plan; you listened to the advice of a friend, whom we instructed; you proposed for Mamie West, and to-day you expect to marry her. But first, look well at her, while I tell you her name is Mary Howard—the child of Annie Moore and Richard Howard, alias Richard Fulmore. Do you comprehend the situation?"

It were impossible to describe the consternation that ensued; the facts being proved, the net so skillfully spread, the villain so neatly secured. And need we tell the joy that followed, when, in merry haste, Mamie and Adrian were married, and "Hillside" was restored to its rightful owners?

The Lovers' Parting; OR, SAVED FROM DEATH.

BY RALPH RINGWOOD.

"AND you will wait and be true, Nellie?" said Gaston Noble, as he drew the beautiful girl to his side.

"Oh, Gaston, how can you ask?" was the tearful response, as she raised her face from the shoulder where it had rested.

"Forgive me, darling; there was no doubt in the question, only that I so love to hear you say those sweet words again and again—"

"Yes, Gaston, even while I dread this parting—oh, so much more than I can tell, yet will I wait and be true, for beyond the clouds and darkness that have gathered around our lives, I can see the dawning of a better and brighter day," and the face of the lovely girl wore a look of inspiration.

"Until then may God keep you, Nellie," and Gaston Noble gathered the delicate form in his strong arms, and imprinted a pure kiss upon her dewy lips.

"Good-by, my darling—good-by!" and he was gone.

The lovers had come down to speak the parting words at the old trysting-place upon the cliffs that overlooked the Ohio, far up amid the mountains where it first gathers strength and power for the long journey to the sea. Here they had first met; here was told the "old, old story," and it was fit that they should part here, while he turned his face toward the unknown wilderness where Boone and Kenton had gone, to try and win for himself a suitable home, whither, in good time, he might convey his bride.

Gaston Noble was one of "nature's noblemen," in the truest sense of the word. Gentle, true and tender to those he loved, but brave and gallant withal as was ever knight of old time.

Sweet Nellie Clifford we will not even attempt to describe. Let it suffice that she was all that was lovely in woman, and more than fair to look upon.

The sun dropped behind the wooded slopes in the west as Gaston Noble sprang down the narrow pathway that led to the "landing" some mile or more below.

The "broadhorn" that was to bear him toward the promised land—there was no steamboat then—was to start on its long voyage that evening at sundown, and so he found that he had but a short half-hour in which to reach his destination in time.

With the pressure of these sweet lips still clinging to his own, and the murmur of the low, sad voice yet ringing in his ears, he bounded down the rugged way heedless of all obstacles that lay in his path.

Before his time had expired he was there, only to be told, and how his heart leaped at the words, that the boat would not start until the following morning. Something had detained her captain.

With an aching void in her heart, Nellie Clifford stood and watched the retreating figure of her lover, and long after he had disappeared from sight she continued to gaze upon the spot where she had seen him last.

And thus she stood until the gathering shadows warned her of the approach of night, when, with a weary sigh, she turned her face toward home, that lay across the hill in the valley beyond.

At the foot of the eminence where the lovers had parted, there ran a stream of considerable size, emptying into the river a little way off, which was spanned by the trunk of a large tree that had been felled across it, from bank to bank, to serve the purpose of a bridge, the upper side flattened and thus made easy of passage.

By the time Nellie Clifford reached this

rustic bridge darkness was fast enshrouding the ravine and densely wooded hill-side that rose beyond, and with a beating heart she started across, nerved by the thought that once on the other side she would soon be in sight of home.

More than half the passage had been made, when suddenly, from out the thick undergrowth that lined the stream, there came a deep, savage growl that caused the frightened girl to pause in deadly terror.

Absolutely incapable of motion, Nellie stood and stared in the direction from whence the sound had come. Not long did she have to wait an explanation, for a moment later a monstrous black bear, gaunt and starved with his long winter's sleep, burst from the thicket, and, with open mouth, from which protruded a blood-red tongue, dashed out upon the log.

With a piercing scream, that rung sharply over hill and valley, the poor girl, with an involuntary prayer, sprung back upon the pathway that led up the acclivity, and sped away like a frightened deer.

Behind her she heard the heavy thud of the brute's great feet, as they rose and fell upon the rocky way—drawing nearer and still nearer each moment, until she fancied the hot and fetid breath of the monster fanned her cheek.

Oh for the brave heart and strong arm now, of him who had left her but a brief while before!

Her limbs are failing under the terrible strain; her breath comes in gasps, growing fainter and fainter; the dim twilight of the upper ground fades from her sight; she can go no further, and, with a despairing shriek, she sinks upon the rocks, but, even in the supreme moment of agony, thinking of him.

"Oh, Gaston! Gaston! Where are you now?" and as all things earthly fade away, she hears, as in a dream:

"Here, here, to save you, my Nellie!" and with the leap of a panther Gaston Noble bounds over the prostrate form, and stands between her and death.

He has only his heavy hunting-knife, but what of that, for, even with his naked hands he would have stood as firm.

For an instant only the bear paused, and then, with a savage growl, he dashed forward, and the fight began.

The terrible conflict was short, sharp and decisive.

Braced firmly upon his feet, Gaston met the shock, and as he felt the sharp teeth of the monster in his shoulder, he drove the heavy blade to the hilt in the shaggy body; again and again the knife rose and fell, until, faint with loss of blood, that poured from numberless wounds, both the combatants sunk, side by side, upon the rocks.

The brute lay dead with the knife in his heart, but brave Gaston Noble was stretched beside the body, as motionless as his enemy.

And so Nellie Clifford found him, when, with a shuddering sigh, consciousness returned.

Assistance came at length, attracted by the young girl's screams, and Gaston Noble was tenderly borne to the home of his brother.

I need hardly say that he was nursed by loving hands, nor need I tell who that nurse was. But, before the autumn came there was a quiet wedding in the village church across the river, and Gaston Noble went not to the "Far West."

The Perils of a Night.

BY CHARLES E. LASALLE.

YOUNG Brandon Havens, full of the zeal of adventure, resolved to seek for excitement in the far Iowa wilds. The year was that, not even now a generation removed, when the "Garden State" was the tramping ground of the untamed savage, and the fierce Delaware and implacable Pawnee made a trip to the headwaters of the tributary streams one of great danger. But Brandon, allured by stories of the splendid "game" there to be found, joined a party formed in the Illinois settlements to penetrate to the northern Iowa forests, and at the close of a summer day found himself alone in these wilds, having wandered, in his quest of spoils, so far from the party camp as to be, literally, lost. His want of knowledge of the woods, which stretched around him, mile upon mile in all directions, rendered his situation extremely embarrassing and perilous. Though a good hunter, in the sport sense of the word, he was neither a skilled woodman nor a scout, able to read Indian "sign," or to follow a trail. Had he been, he never would have wandered thicker alone, his only companion being a noble mastiff, whose devotion to his young master was complete.

All day had he tramped to and fro, hoping to make his way from the dismal labyrinth encompassing him. Game proved to be surprisingly scarce, and, in his eagerness to find the camp before dark, he had not paused in his lonely tramp even to eat. Hence, night found him both weary and hungry; he was dispirited, physically and mentally.

Shade by shade the gloom deepened, until night fairly closed around him; when, almost in despair, he threw himself upon the ground for repose, his faithful dog, "Wolf," at his side.

But, weary as he was, he could not sleep. His mind was so excited over the adven-

tures of the day, and there was such a gnawing sense of hunger, that a disquiet was produced, which effectually drove away all approach of coma.

He lay idly upon his back, his eyes gazing vacantly at the darkness above, and himself listening to the mournful sighing of the night-wind, when he caught the near rustle of leaves, while, at the same time, Wolf uttered a warning whine, and rose to his feet.

Havens came to the sitting posture, and grasped his rifle. By and by, he could hear the steady tread of some animal, steering toward him, and he raised the hammer of his rifle. At the same time he placed his other hand upon the head of Wolf and compelled him to lie down.

By and by, the hunter caught the phosphorescent glitter of the animal's eyes, and thus guided, he raised his gun. There followed a frenzied leap, a fall, a few struggles, and then all was still.

Wolf was furious to rush upon the struggling animal, the instant the gun was fired, but his master restrained him, believing there was no necessity of his dog running any risk of injury, such as he would be apt to receive from a ferocious beast in its death throes.

Finding, however, from the long continued silence, that whatever the nature of the animal might be, it was unquestionably dead, Havens concluded to kindle a fire.

Any quantity of dead leaves and twigs could be found, with little care, and his flint and tinder were in a condition to be used. He was further incited to the kindling of the fire, in the face of all prudence, by the exceeding chill of the night.

Havens supposed the animal to be a panther, and great, therefore, was his surprise when his camp-fire revealed to him a small deer, stretched lifeless upon the ground.

"He must have been frightened by something," reflected our hero, "and was coming to me for assistance. Poor fellow! but isn't that providential, now?"

A sort of reaction of spirits came over him, at this unexpected provision of food—food which was so sorely needed that, after giving his dog a good slice, he proceeded to cook an equally "healthy" extract for his hungry self.

He had a good hot fire kindled, so that this was easily done, and the savor of the burning venison was enough to drive a hungry man wild.

When the cooking was finished, never did poor mortal enjoy a meal better than Havens, and with the return of physical comfort, something like his old exuberance of spirits came back. Such a quietude came over the young hunter, that he felt like sleep; and, assuming an easy position, so that his head rested against the large tree behind him, and his feet were turned toward the camp-fire, he calmly committed himself to the care of heaven, and awaited the approach of sleep.

But, he had scarcely begun to doze, when he became sensible that something unusual was going on around him. Wolf gave several short, sharp barks, and showed such uneasiness that his master cast off his drowsiness and rose to his feet.

From the wrangling, snarling and snapping of teeth, he rightly concluded that a band of wolves had been attracted to the spot by the smell of the meat.

This discovery was a relief, as he cared nothing for these animals, except the annoyance of being kept awake by them. No hunger could impel them to cross the line of fire, with which the hunter can inclose himself; and all that he had to do was to keep his camp-fire brightly blazing.

The wolves appeared to number about a dozen, and, as may be supposed, required but a few minutes to leave nothing but the shining bones of the deer's carcass.

In fact, this taste of flesh merely served to whet their appetites, and they now turned their eyes longingly upon the hunter and dog, who were so earnestly scrutinizing them.

One of the gaunt, cadaverous beasts, venturing to thrust his long snout too near the fire, was rewarded by a rifle bullet, beheading him with his two eyes, which doubled him up in death, with his yelp clipped off as it were with a knife.

This carcass afforded an additional meal to the wolves, but at the end of it, they seemed more ravenous than ever, and approached still nearer the fire.

there was no such immunity from the panther, whose agility would carry him up among the limbs of any tree in the woods.

The only advantage in the latter case was that the hunter could be tolerably certain of but one foe, so that if he could drive bullet into his heart or cranium, he would be freed of all danger whatever from wild animals.

S. Havens advanced to the firelight and made sure that the priming of his gun was all right, and then, placing his back against the tree, stood on the defensive.

Wolf began to manifest an unusual uneasiness. He whined in his expressive way, trotted around the tree several times, and then sat down, with his nose pointing toward the river.

Which meant that the danger, whatever form it took, was approaching from that direction.

Havens leaned his head forward and strove to penetrate the gloom, and listened; but nothing whatever rewarded his sight or hearing.

Several minutes passing thus, Havens noticed that his dog was gazing upward, as though the particular object which excited his ire was in the tree branches, instead of being on the ground.

Following the direction indicated by the action of Wolf, his master was able to locate the animal which now threatened his life.

The faint light thrown up by the campfire, was barely sufficient to reveal the form of an enormous panther, crouching like a cat upon a large limb and glaring down upon him.

Scarcely a hundred feet separated man and brute, and the former, confident of his aim, concluded to test his marksmanship, certain that he could rid himself of this incubus at once.

Kneeling down by the firelight, he took a long and deliberate aim, sighting for a point directly between the two glaring eyeballs.

All this time, the beast was crouched down, in the attitude of a cat on the point of springing upon its prey, and never moved until Havens pulled the trigger.

Even then the fierce creature stirred not; for to the inexpressible chagrin of the hunter, his rifle flashed in the pan; and, instead of the dying struggles of the animal, he only heard its threatening growl.

Carefully lowering his piece, he poured the powder in the pan, continually glancing upward to make sure that his enemy did not steal upon him unawares.

When he was ready to fire again, Havens concluded not to do so, and he was really glad of the flash in the pan, for at that distance, he plainly saw it was impossible to do more than merely wound him, and that, exasperating a naturally irritable animal, would have precipitated his attack, and insured a bloody encounter, with the probabilities all on the side of the panther's success.

Havens now comprehended what the creature was endeavoring to do. Like all wild animals he naturally had a fear of approaching a man whose eye was fixed upon him, and he was seeking either to get above or behind him.

Finding that he could not steal upon him unawares, the panther now leaped to the ground, and began creeping round in a circle, of which the tree was the center, his whole manner that of a cat as it steals upon the unconscious mouse.

It was an easy matter for the wary hunter to turn with the animal and keep his face toward him, and this he did, holding his gun ready to discharge the instant his enemy should lose patience and attack him.

Wolf was in a quiver of rage, and when he saw his master threatened by this beast, he could hardly be restrained from springing out; but Havens wisely kept him in check.

Brave and powerful as was the mastiff, he had no chance in the world against such a panther, who would have torn him to shreds in the twinkling of an eye.

More than once, the young hunter was on the point of raising his gun and firing. The panther had a curious way of creeping up quite close, and then suddenly retreating and approaching from a different direction, no doubt with the expectation of taking his prey unawares.

Baffled again and again, he as often renewed his stealthy attempt, until the patience of the man became exhausted.

"We may as well settle the matter at once," he reflected, as he brought his piece to his shoulder.

When the panther came up for about the twentieth time, there was a flash, report and yell, and he sprung half a dozen feet in air, with the bullet buried in his neck.

Fearing such a result, Havens began reloading as rapidly as possible, in order to give the finishing shot.

Furious with pain and rage, and with an instinctive knowledge of who had inflicted it, the wounded brute made directly for the hunter, who, not having time to recharge his piece, ran quickly to the smoldering camp-fire and caught up a brand, which, with one circular swoop over his head, burst into broad flame and checked the panther, when he was near enough to strike his enemy with his paw.

This act of the savage creature had its effect upon Wolf, who, heedless of the call of his master, dashed like a thunderbolt at their common foe, and the two rolled to the ground in the fierce encounter of death.

Fearful that his faithful dog would be killed, Havens shouted to him again and again; but, if he was heard, the creature was powerless to obey.

Over and over they rolled until they were at his very feet, and it was out of his power to identify them, with such bewildering quickness did they change places.

Then he paused long enough to complete the loading of his weapon, but found, when ready, that he would be as likely to kill one as the other of the combatants, and, therefore, for the present occasion, his gun was useless.

By this time the hunter was in a flurry of terror, lest each second should be the last of Wolf; and, unable to restrain him longer, he drew his knife, leaped forward and mingled in the fray.

Stooping down, he threw out his left arm and caught at something. Fortunately he grasped the loose, velvety skin of the panther's neck, and holding on with the grip of a giant, he buried his hunting-knife to the hilt in his throat, striking it again and again.

At the same time, the infuriated Wolf was at work with his teeth, and the wounded and overmatched panther speedily began to succumb.

Gradually his clutch upon the dog relaxed, and with a slight jerk, Havens pulled him away, and as he loosened his hold, he saw that it was limp and lifeless.

The moment Wolf was free, his master made an examination of his wounds. His body was covered with blood, and he had been grievously hurt; but none of his wounds were mortal. They had done little more than tear the skin and lacerate the outer flesh; but they were necessarily painful.

"Poor fellow!" said Havens, as he stooped down and patted his head. "You are a good, brave dog."

Wolf whined, and crept closer to his master's feet, as if to say:

"All this I did for you, and I am willing to lay down my life for you."

Near by was a small running stream, to which the hunter led his dog and there bathed and dressed his wounds as well as was possible at the time.

This done, he returned to his camp-fire, which had now almost expired.

Havens had suffered so much from the wild beasts of the night, that he determined to keep the fire going until day-light.

It was toward evening; I was looking out for a fit station for my camp, when I noticed that my dog was uneasy, while his horse all but stood still. Looking upward, I saw several vultures in the air. Curiosity in some sort overcoming prudence, I tied my horse and dog to a tree, and, clutching my rifle, crept on to where the scene of action seemed to be.

I advanced with all the due caution of an experienced hunter, and soon reached the summit of a small eminence, along which ran a wall of thorny bushes. Stooping to see if I could pass, the whole was explained at a single glance. It was a huge lion enjoying his dinner.

The mighty master of the forest had killed a young zebra, which he was tearing to pieces in a most unseemly manner. He was stretched out at his ease, enjoying his prey, which seemed greatly to his taste, and also to the tastes of a host of other animals, of a less lordly character. Attracted by the scent, they had come rushing to the cure. These were hyenas and jackals, which, having stealthily approached, stood with fierce and envious eyes, watching the rapid motion of the jaws, which portended but a scanty remnant for themselves.

In addition to these already sufficiently repulsive animals, there were slate-colored vultures, which had come whirling from the clouds, and which now, with folded wings, stretching out their bare necks and uttering the most piercing cries, jumped in a most ridiculous manner, toward the object of their greedy desire, something like some hungry men-servants watching the performance of their masters on a scanty allowance.

As long as the whole of this parasitical gang kept at a respectful distance, the master of the feast allowed them to growl, scream, whine, chatter, and make every here that ever since I had been on the island, I had contracted a very peculiar habit of spending my leisure hours.

When I was indisposed to work, and did not wish to smoke, I would fold my arms, and after thinking awhile, begin a story aloud.

Hundreds and hundreds of the hours which I spent on that island were beguiled by this practice. I would get so interested in my narratives that I would gladly have preserved some of them, which, without flattery to myself, I decide to have been exceedingly engrossing and entrancing; at all events, they were so to me.

But as yet I had not made me pens, ink and paper, but how I remedied this in the end, and wrote this very manuscript, will be seen in its proper place. Another very great amusement with me was to read out the adventures of the skeleton, whose manuscript I had so miraculously found, and which, to me, was the most delightful book in the world.

But these digressions take me from my regular narrative, and prevent me from carrying on the story of my preparations in the eventuality of a siege. This idea held such fast possession of my mind that it had scarcely room for any other, and I was eternally contriving and thinking how

to evade being entrapped by them. My deep desire to be again in company with my fellow-creatures was as great as ever; but to be alone forever was better than to fall into the hands of men who made a practice of devouring human flesh.

A few days after the completion of my fortress, which now assumed a most formidable aspect in my eyes, I again resolved on an excursion. During the whole of this period, my horse and zebra had remained hopped without having, however, a very good range, but coming home at night to lie near my cave, to have some corn and salt from a bowl I placed within their reach.

I took the pains on this occasion to keep my dogs in a leash, so that they might not startle the birds which it was my firm belief I was about to catch, though how was not as yet exactly defined in my own mind. I was determined, however, that I would do so, not only for use, but for amusement.

It was my belief that it was in and on the skirts of the woods which were near my bower on the lake that I should most easily discover what I was in search of, so in this direction I took my way early in the morning, mounted on my horse, and with Tiger—to his great disgust, kept within bounds by a rope—trotting by my side. With a view to listen for the forest sounds, by which chiefly I could hope to track my hoped-for prey, I moved very slowly.

My accoutrements consisted of a gun, a net similar to that with which I had captured my gazelles, my sword-saw, knife, and a bundle of twine, a small supply of provisions, and a gourd for water.

Thus equipped, I advanced quietly and cautiously; but for a long time nothing occurred to disturb my meditations, when suddenly they were interrupted by an adventure of rather a startling character. For some time no trace had been seen of any large wild beasts, which was the more surprising that my domestic animals appeared to promise them an easy prey. One thing, however, struck me forcibly, and this was the fact of the abundance of all kind of game on my island, which, for a very long time, puzzled me inconceivably.

How natural and easy of explanation the circumstance was will be seen in a future part of my narrative.

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When I was indisposed to work, and did not wish to smoke, I would fold my arms, and after thinking awhile, begin a story aloud.

Hundreds and hundreds of the hours which I spent on that island were beguiled by this practice. I would get so interested in my narratives that I would gladly have preserved some of them, which, without flattery to myself, I decide to have been exceedingly engrossing and entrancing; at all events, they were so to me.

But as yet I had not made me pens, ink and paper, but how I remedied this in the end, and wrote this very manuscript, will be seen in its proper place. Another very great amusement with me was to read out the adventures of the skeleton, whose manuscript I had so miraculously found, and which, to me, was the most delightful book in the world.

But these digressions take me from my regular narrative, and prevent me from carrying on the story of my preparations in the eventuality of a siege. This idea held such fast possession of my mind that it had scarcely room for any other, and I was eternally contriving and thinking how

to evade being entrapped by them. My deep desire to be again in company with my fellow-creatures was as great as ever; but to be alone forever was better than to fall into the hands of men who made a practice of devouring human flesh.

A few days after the completion of my fortress, which now assumed a most formidable aspect in my eyes, I again resolved on an excursion. During the whole of this period, my horse and zebra had remained hopped without having, however, a very good range, but coming home at night to lie near my cave, to have some corn and salt from a bowl I placed within their reach.

I took the pains on this occasion to keep my dogs in a leash, so that they might not startle the birds which it was my firm belief I was about to catch, though how was not as yet exactly defined in my own mind. I was determined, however, that I would do so, not only for use, but for amusement.

It was my belief that it was in and on the skirts of the woods which were near my bower on the lake that I should most easily discover what I was in search of, so in this direction I took my way early in the morning, mounted on my horse, and with Tiger—to his great disgust, kept within bounds by a rope—trotting by my side. With a view to listen for the forest sounds, by which chiefly I could hope to track my hoped-for prey, I moved very slowly.

My accoutrements consisted of a gun, a net similar to that with which I had captured my gazelles, my sword-saw, knife, and a bundle of twine, a small supply of provisions, and a gourd for water.

Thus equipped, I advanced quietly and cautiously; but for a long time nothing occurred to disturb my meditations, when suddenly they were interrupted by an adventure of rather a startling character. For some time no trace had been seen of any large wild beasts, which was the more surprising that my domestic animals appeared to promise them an easy prey. One thing, however, struck me forcibly, and this was the fact of the abundance of all kind of game on my island, which, for a very long time, puzzled me inconceivably.

How natural and easy of explanation the circumstance was will be seen in a future part of my narrative.

It was toward evening; I was looking out for a fit station for my camp, when I noticed that my dog was uneasy, while his horse all but stood still. Looking upward, I saw several vultures in the air. Curiosity in some sort overcoming prudence, I tied my horse and dog to a tree, and, clutching my rifle, crept on to where the scene of action seemed to be.

I advanced with all the due caution of an experienced hunter, and soon reached the summit of a small eminence, along which ran a wall of thorny bushes. Stooping to see if I could pass, the whole was explained at a single glance. It was a huge lion enjoying his dinner.

The mighty master of the forest had killed a young zebra, which he was tearing to pieces in a most unseemly manner. He was stretched out at his ease, enjoying his prey, which seemed greatly to his taste, and also to the tastes of a host of other animals, of a less lordly character. Attracted by the scent, they had come rushing to the cure. These were hyenas and jackals, which, having stealthily approached, stood with fierce and envious eyes, watching the rapid motion of the jaws, which portended but a scanty remnant for themselves.

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HAND-BOOK OF CROQUET.—A complete Guide to the Game and Practice of the Game. By EDMUND ROURKE. This guide has, during the few years of its existence, rapidly outgrown the first vague and imperfect rules and regulations of its inventor; and, as almost every nation which it is played adopts a different code of laws, it becomes a difficult task for a stranger to assimilate his play to that of others. It is, therefore, highly desirable that one uniform system should be generally adopted, and hence the object of this work is to establish a recognized standard of play.

YACHTING AND BOATING.—This volume will be found very complete as a guide to the conduct of watercraft, and full of interesting information alike to the amateur and novice. The chapter referring to the recent great rowing race of the Oxford and Cambridge clubs on the Thames river, will be found particularly interesting.

BALL ROOM COMPANION, and Guide to Dancing. Containing Etiquette of the Ball-room; Ladies' Ball-room Toilets; Gentlemen's Dress; Special Hints of Conduct, together with explicit directions how to perform the various Round Dances, Quadrilles, and Figures. Also, hints on Private Parties, Sociables, Meetings, Promenade Concerts, etc.; forms of Invitations, Refreshments used, Music

SATURDAY JOURNAL.

MINDING THE BABY.

BY JOE JOT, JR.

It's a little baby come to console
While its mamma goes down street;
Turn along and make no fussie,
No little darlin's half so sweet.
There, don't cry now, toosie, woesey!
By O Baby boosey, woesey!
Ten little toes and two little feet!
Trot, trot, trot, whip up the pony,
Lots o' little fun to take a ride;
Quit your squalin', papa bring honey;
There, don't open your mouth so wide.
Dot the tomach ahe, toosie, woesey!
Dot's too bad now, boosey, woesey!
A little polologe had better be tried.
Let go my hair there, none of your pranks now!
Stop that yelling, I want none of that!
Dry up in a minute! Take these spanks, now.
You've something to cry for, you little brat!
Kicking all your clothes off, you little hussy;
Never saw a young 'un so fidgy and fussy;
And I'll make you commit suicide in two minutes
By the watch, you understand that.

The Creole Renegade.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

"Look out! hyar they come, boys. Once more gl' them blazes!" almost howled the tall, lank guide, as he added another red-man to the score of those he had already sent to their last account.

An irregular, flame-tinted smoke ran around the half-circle formed by the corralled wagons, and the dusky-painted savages recollect'd as they had done before, from the stubbornly defended fort, dragging off with them the dead and dying braves; and then once more all was quiet, save the wailing of some affrighted infant, or the groan of the dying, with not an Indian to be seen.

Within the barricade an anxious group were gathered together, apart from the other defenders, engaged in an earnest consultation. Among them was the guide, already referred to, who was listened to as a kind of oracle by his companions.

"Wal, boss, it stands jest this away," he was saying. "We've did well, so far, but we've got us k'rallen, an' onless we git help—which ain't very likely to chance along hyar, ca'se you're off'n the main trail a good bit—why it's on'y a matter of time, fer they'll git in sooner or later, now mark my words. They've got three, or mebbe four, to one, an' though we wipe out a dozen or so, what good is it, on'y to make the eend still harder?"

"But what can we do?" despondently asked the man, addressed as "boss."

"I on'y see one chancin', an' that's a mighty slim one," thoughtfully replied the guide. "You member the train we passed yesterday? the emigrant one? Wal, ef so we cu'd jest git a messenger to them, they're strong a-plenty to lend us a hand, an' I believe they w'd. But now the question is, who's to make the tempt? He must be a brave fell'er, who has good eyes, plenty o' kerridge, an' who kin swim like a duck. Ef m'n on'e 'll ventur', I'll go."

"No, Dick, that would never do!" exclaimed Mr. Calhoun, the captain of the wagon-train. "Without your experience, we should not be able to hold out an hour."

"If the rest are willing to trust me, I will make the attempt," promptly added a young man, modestly, stepping forward.

A shade of pain spread over the face of the leader, at this, for Buenos Ayres, the young volunteer, was like an adopted son to his heart, and the affianced lover of the gentle Clara Calhoun. But he did not speak; only glanced anxiously at the guide.

"I knowed it, younker, I knowed it! an' you're jest the fell'er I'd a' picked out, on'y I wanted it to be volunteer-like; fer, as I tell ye, it'll be hand in hand wi' death."

"But no worse than to stay here, and I may succeed. If you've any advice to give, let's have it, for the sooner I make the attempt the better for all."

"You know the most. Jest make tall tracks for the big trail, ef so be you git ol'ar, an' hurry back wi' a wheen o' fellers, double quick. Mebbe you'll be in time, mebbe not."

The plan was simple but none the less dangerous. Ayres was to enter the river, and by diving, aided by the high bank, thus attempt to pass the enemy, who probably were upon the keen look-out along this only avenue of escape. Shielded by the wagons, and under cover of a heavy fire, the young man slid down the bank and entered the water, with the farewells of his comrades still warm in his ears and their grasp upon his hand. He did not bid adieu to Clara, lest it should unman him, now when every nerve was needed.

The next few minutes were fraught with painful suspense to the watchers, for they expected each moment to hear the wild yell of triumph, telling of their scount's capture or death, and the frustration of their last hope. But no such signal came, and an hour passed slowly by, before they allowed themselves to hope.

Two desperate assaults were made that afternoon; and although the first one had been repulsed with fearful slaughter, it had also weakened the little force of the besiegers, so that they trembled anew when the second was made. There was a wild recklessness in these attacks that puzzled even Dick Maxwell, the guide, veteran as he was. It seemed as if they were fighting for more than plunder; as though some master-spirit was urging them on for some deep-set motive—and such, although they did not know it, was the case in reality.

Time and again the savages were hurled back, but each time they returned with renewed ferocity and determination. But the emigrants were fighting for all that was dear upon earth to them, and it seemed as though they must be successful, when a series of wild, triumphant yells, in their rear, astounded them. The enemy had entered the corral by the river side; and now it became one horrid mêlée.

One by one the defenders fell, and but for the intervention of one man, not one would have been left alive. But he, who appeared to wield great power and influence, finally quelled the bloodshed; not, however, until two-thirds of the men were massacred, together with a number of women and children. Yet one could hardly believe that this was the result of pity upon his part, for the blood of the slain still deeply dyed his hands.

He came and stood before the bound form of Mr. Calhoun, who gave a start and half-stifled curse as he appeared to recognize the man. In stature rather slightly built, but of

a muscular, active development; dressed in a faded suit of gray. His age would be difficult to surmise, for his smooth, beardless face gave no clue. His dark complexion, hair, eyes and a slight accent, all spoke of French-creole blood, with perchance a taint of the African; so, at least, his enemies had affirmed.

He had joined the wagon-train some weeks previously, but had been summarily expelled by Calhoun, for offensive remarks toward Clara. Until he had not been seen or heard of, or the deadly glint in his treacherous eye, told how deeply bitter would be his revenge now, and then turned away to where the women were secured. His eye flashed as he noted that Clara was rudely bound to a wagon, and harshly ordered one of the guards to unbind her.

"Believe me, lady," with a mocking bow,

"I deeply regret this rather unceremonious mode of renewing our pleasant acquaintance, but your father was so stern, and my adoration so intense, that I could no longer resist the temptation."

Clara did not answer, but turned away with a shudder of loathing, and catching sight of her father, rushed forward and clasped him in her arms. With an oath the renegade tore her loose, and forbade any intercourse.

The captives passed a wearisome, agonizing night, for the red demons had discovered a quantity of liquor in the wagons, and would travel no further; then began a hideous scene of debauchery. All night long Pierre Lajoie, the creole renegade, with two savages, whom he could trust, kept guard over the captives; for well they knew that if blood was once spilled, the drunken fiends would pause at nothing. But the night passed finally, and then preparations were made for taking up the route, after some difficulty in sobering the "noble red-men."

The wagons after being emptied were set on fire; the plunder packed upon the captured stock, while the prisoners, with one exception, were driven along on foot. Clara Calhoun was seated upon her own horse, that had been reserved for that purpose. In pure defiance Lajoie had caused the captives to stand, and in another minute, all but a half-dozen left as a guard, were after the fair fugitive.

Clara kept to the broad trail and pressed

forward at full speed for nearly an hour,

during which she had traversed half the distance from the scene of the massacre.

Suddenly, in rounding a spur of the foothills, she found herself almost upon a strong body of horsemen. One glance showed her they were whites; then a horseman spurred forward, and she was clasped in the arms of her lover.

Her story was quickly told, and an am-

bush speedily formed, as the enemy could

not be far in the rear. Scarcely had this

been done, when the Indians appeared in

view, using no precaution whatever; and

the first intimation Lajoie and his compa-

nions had of danger was a deadly, withering

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